Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless?

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 11, 2008 at 2:47pm
Post by robertsconley on Mar 11, 2008 at 2:47pm

robertsconley
Level 6
Magician

I was reading this article and came across this quote

www.wired.com/gaming/virtualworlds/news/2008/03/ff_gygax?currentPage=all

The two had what amounted to philosophical differences. "He thinks you can write a rule to cover any situation," Arneson says. "I don't. There are just too many possibilities, especially when you're asking people to use their imaginations." Gygax broke the characters down into a variety of classes, such as magic users and clerics, and expanded the list of weapons, from morning stars to flails. "He was always big on having different weapons have different effects," Arneson says. "Years later, he literally had a small book on different kinds of polearms, which I regard as the ultimate in silliness. It's a pointy thing on the end of a stick!"

Posts: 402

Then I remember reading in First Fantasy Campaign that players bought spells.

So my question is that did they have even had classes in the original Arneson game?

gsvenson
Level 4
Theurgist

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 11, 2008 at 4:23pm
Post by gsvenson on Mar 11, 2008 at 4:23pm
We had classes, Fighters, Magic Users and Priests, we also had a Merchant. We didn't call them classes at that time, though. And what weapon you used didn't really matter, unless it was magical. There may have been other classes. I didn't interact with all of the players at the time, only those that were able to be there on Saturdays. I can't tell you how the other classes worked, either, as I only played a fighter in those days.

Posts: 108

calithena
Moderator
Official
"Fight On!"
Scribe

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 12, 2008 at 8:43pm
Post by calithena on Mar 12, 2008 at 8:43pm
Svenny, you were there and I wasn't, but I've heard two interesting things about this.

1) Mike Mornard said there was no cleric originally, it came about explicitly in reaction to a PC who became a vampire (Sir Fang). The whole 'turn undead' thing was originally a weapon for a GM to use against a player according to this story.

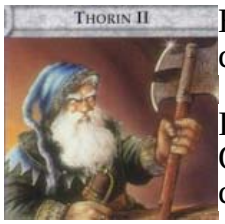
2) I still remember reading this story where spells were scrolls, can't find it though.

Will

Withstand Adversity
Posts: 2,801

Falconer
Level 9 Sorcerer

Cleric of OD&D



OD&D, Middle-earth, Star Trek TOS
Posts: 1,615
Member is Online

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 12, 2008 at 10:23pm
Post by Falconer on Mar 12, 2008 at 10:23pm
My guess is, if it was in *Chainmail* then you could play it. Hence Wizards, Heroes, Hobbits, Elves, Vampires, Orcs, Dwarves, Pixies? etc. The Cleric was a new addition in the Blackmoor campaign, and no doubt there were quite a few others.

I'm not sure the *Wired* guy meant to assert—or I'm not sure he was correct in asserting—that Gygax broke it down into classes **but Arneson didn't**. In any case, OD&D as published is certainly quite clear on the fact that you can play **anything**.

Certainly Gygax eventually went in the direction of "write a rule for everything," with AD&D and Mythus, and that may have been what Arneson was referring to. But, as we all know Gygax later in life went back to OD&D (indeed, rumor has it he never actually ran AD&D), so Arneson certainly doesn't have a monopoly on Freestyle Judging. Regards.

gsvenson
Level 4 Theurgist

Posts: 108

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 13, 2008 at 7:51am
Post by gsvenson on Mar 13, 2008 at 7:51am
As I said we didn't use the term classes, but Mike Carr played Bishop Carr (renamed in DA1) and Dan Nicholson played the Merchant in the early gaming sessions.

I have no idea what special rules applied to their characters. Mike's character could do things like raise the dead, bless and make holy water, though, so there had to have been some special abilities related to his character type which you now refer to as a class.

Last Edit: Mar 13, 2008 at 7:59am by gsvenson

robertsconley
Level 6 Magician

Posts: 402

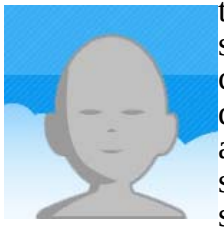
Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 13, 2008 at 8:19am
Post by robertsconley on Mar 13, 2008 at 8:19am
Note that the quote I posted is said by Arneson not the article's author. That why I found it interesting.

gsvenson
Level 4 Theurgist

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 13, 2008 at 9:46am
Post by gsvenson on Mar 13, 2008 at 9:46am
I probably just don't understand the terminology that the rest of you use...

Posts: 108

robertthebald
Level 1 Medium



Posts: 21

Falconer
Level 9
Sorcerer

Cleric of
OD&D

OD&D,
Middle-earth,
Star Trek TOS
Posts: 1,615
Member is
Online

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 13, 2008 at 12:37pm
Post by robertthebald on Mar 13, 2008 at 12:37pm
We are looking back at a game through three decades of codification and evolution. It was evolving, even as we were playing it, when David first invented it. You people nowadays are used to refering to (and thinking in terms of) Magic User, Fighting Man, Cleric, etc. When we first started, people were not thinking in terms of classes; they were thinking in terms of their own character, and what he could do. The actions they took were in line with the character they decided to be. People would be a wizard because they liked the idea of using spells. Or they were a fighting man because they liked the idea of slaying creatures. As a magic user, you could use spells. As a fighting man, you could only use magic if it was intrinsic to something you had (like a sword). People were in essence pioneering classes by the actions they took with their characters. As more people started playing in the campaign, these rules were expanded and codified into the many classes you see now in D&D. This is probably why there is a disconnect between what you are looking for, and the explanation that Greg is giving you.

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 13, 2008 at 2:29pm
Post by Falconer on Mar 13, 2008 at 2:29pm
Thanks, guys. We're just trying to understand how it was, that's all. It's fascinating, to be sure. Cobbling together bits from what we have—Chainmail, Dungeons & Dragons, the Blackmoor Supplement, The First Fantasy Campaign, and Adventures in Fantasy—is sometimes helpful and sometimes way off the mark from how things actually worked in the Twin Cities Campaign. And I'm sure that even today Arneson is still evolving his rules!

robertsconley
Level 6
Magician

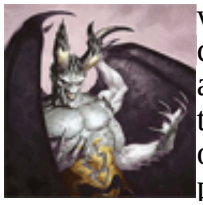
Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Mar 13, 2008 at 3:16pm
Post by robertsconley on Mar 13, 2008 at 3:16pm
I can appreciate this. While I participated in NERO Larp from 92 to 04, I saw an evolution of rules similar to what D&D went through. The first system was real basic compared to what was used later and there were a lot of intermediate steps and regional variations in between.

For somebody entering the LARP today and try to understand how it was back in the day it would be a rather confusing thing to try to figure out.

Posts: 402

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Jun 4, 2008 at 1:50pm
Post by havard on Jun 4, 2008 at 1:50pm

havard
Level 7
Enchanter



Skandaharian
Posts: 548

Mar 13, 2008 at 12:37pm robertthebald said:
We are looking back at a game through three decades of codification and evolution. It was evolving, even as we were playing it, when David first invented it. You people nowadays are used to refering to (and thinking in terms of) Magic User, Fighting Man, Cleric, etc. When we first started, people were not thinking in terms of classes; they were thinking in terms of their own character, and what he could do. The actions they took were in line with the character they decided to be. People would be a wizard because they liked the idea of using spells. Or they were a fighting man because they liked the idea of slaying creatures. As a magic user, you could use spells. As a fighting man, you could only use magic if it was intrinsic to something you had (like a sword). People were in essence pioneering classes by the actions they took with their characters. As more people started playing in the campaign, these rules were expanded and codified into the many classes you see now in D&D. This is probably why there is a disconnect between what you are looking for, and the explanation that Greg is giving you.

This is very interesting. Does that mean that you didn't have different experience tables for each class? This is something that often caused misunderstandings in my early BECMI campaigns as the DM would tell us we could all begin with 4th level characters, which would mean whoever chose to begin as a Thief really came to regret that later on...

Havard

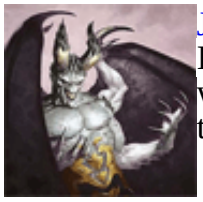
Finarvyn
Administrator
Dungeon Master

Posts: 5,289

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Jun 5, 2008 at 10:50pm redbaron likes this.
Post by Finarvyn on Jun 5, 2008 at 10:50pm
If I recall correctly, Dave's initial fighters were "flunkys" and "heroes" and "superheroes". There wasn't really an XP advancement, per se, but more of a "well, you did it; you advanced" when Dave thought you had done something significant.

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Jun 6, 2008 at 12:55am
Post by havard on Jun 6, 2008 at 12:55am

havard
Level 7
Enchanter



Jun 5, 2008 at 10:50pm Finarvyn said:
If I recall correctly, Dave's initial fighters were "flunkys" and "heroes" and "superheroes". There wasn't really an XP advancement, per se, but more of a "well, you did it; you advanced" when Dave thought you had done something significant.

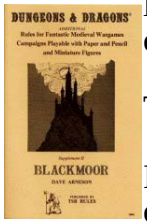
Skandaharian
Posts: 548

Wow, things were really different back then. Very interesting!

Havard

darneson
Level 3 Conjurer

Was Arneson's Blackmoor Classless? Jun 10, 2008 at 10:54pm
Post by darneson on Jun 10, 2008 at 10:54pm
Magic users in the beginning were more of an effort to give the players more firepower. A month or so later the clerics were added to heal up players more quickly. The plague of undead, like sir Fang, gave clerics additional powers to help eliminate that threat,



That's the short answer.

I ran into Kurt Krey at D&D day and that reminded me that he was the first evil wizard. As a compliment to the Soukup brothers evil warriors. Six or eight other original players were there as well. Very neat.

Co-Creator of OD&D
Posts: 56

Dave Arneson

Last Edit: Jun 11, 2008 at 3:01pm by Finarvyn

Related Topics & Stories
More topics from this board
Blackmoor Blog
by havard
Analysis of the combat system of the Dungeon! boardgame
by hedgehobbit
Blackmoor printing history
by oldkat
FFC: about "Protection Points"
by mannclay
FFC Mysteries
by redbaron

Click here to remove banner ads from this forum.
This Forum Hosted For FREE By ProBoards
Get Your Own Free Message Boards & Free Forums!
Terms of Service | Privacy Policy | Notice | FTC Disclosure | Report Abuse | Mobile | **Advertise Here**